(d) if so, the details of the discussion held between the two countries uptill now?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI DIGVIJAY SINGH): (a) Yes.

(b) The Dialogue serves as an institutional forum for regular consultations between India and the United States on developments in India's extended neighbourhood and represents another step in fulfilling the commitment of the Prime Minister and the U.S. President to strengthen the strategic framework of India-U.S. relations.

(c) Yes.

(d) The first India–U.S. Regional Dialogue was held on 24-25 September 2002. The two sides exchanged views on the current and long-term political, economic and security issues in the region.

Neighbourhood economic policy

1703. SHRI PARMESHWAR KUMAR AGARWALLA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that India is working on a neighbourhood economic policy;

(b) if so, the details of the policy and in what way it is different from the usual foreign policy; and

(c) the countries those are being associated in the policy?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI DIGVIJAY SINGH): (a) to (c) The Government's objective remains to strengthen mutually beneficial trade and economic linkages with all our neighbours, both, through bilateral initiatives, as well as through relevant regional cooperation mechanisms. Policies are constantly finetuned to subserve this objective.

Venue of SAARC summit

1704. SHRI K.B. KRISHNA MURTHY: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the next meetings of the SAARC is going to be held in Islamabad in January, 2003;

(b) whether almost all the SAARC member countries have agreed upon the venue;

(c) whether this has come as a diplomatic setback for India having lobbied for an alternate venue; and

(d) whether India is likely to decline the invitation?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI DIGVIJAY SINGH): (a) The next SAARC Summit is to be held in Islamabad. Pakistan has proposed dates in January 2003 for the Summit.

(b) Yes.

(c) SAARC Sumits are hosted by member States in alphabetical rotation. After Nepal, it is the turn of Pakistan to host it. India did not lobby for an alternate venue, and the question of a diplomatic set-back for India does not arise.

(d) The question of an invitation will arise only after the dates have been agreed to by all member States.

Export of sensitive material to Iraq

1705. SHRI K. B. KRISHNA MURTHY: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have studied the dossier presented by the British Prime Minister in the House of Commons last month, on an Indian company found involved in export of sensitive material to Iraq to help its chemicals weapons programme;

(b) whether this company was under watch for a long time;

(c) if so, the reasons for not taking preventive measures to check export of such sensitive cargo;

(d) whether Government have ordered any inquiry in this regard; and

(e) if so, the findings thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI DIGVIJAY SINGH): (a) An Indian company was mentioned by name in the dossier on Iraq released by the British Government. Government studied the dossier and asked the British Government the basis of their report. The British Government's response referred to among other things newspaper reports in India about the said company's involvement in exports of sensitive materials.

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.